



## An observation of Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus dubius* in The Gambia

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Le 28 août 1994, l'auteur, accompagné de trois autres observateurs, a observé un Aigle d'Ayres *Hieraaetus dubius* au sud de l'aéroport de Yundum, Western Division, Gambie. Une description exhaustive est présentée. L'espèce est surtout résidente: rares sont les observations en dehors des aires de reproduction certaines ou probables. Barlow *et al.*<sup>1</sup> mentionnent trois observations antérieures en Gambie: à Yundum, en mars 1991, et à Kampant, en avril 1991 et mars 1994. L'observation d'un oiseau photographié près de Elephant Island, le 13 janvier 1984, concernait très probablement un Aigle pêcheur *Haliaeetus vocifer* immature et fut rejeté<sup>5</sup>. Le statut de l'Aigle d'Ayres est incertain au Sénégal, où une observation antérieure fut jugée inacceptable par Morel & Morel<sup>6</sup>.

On 28 August 1994, together with Professor M Thoma and the Gambian ornithologist M Lamin Bojang, my wife and I visited an area of open bush savannah with scattered pockets of agriculture (principally peanuts) south of Yundum airport, Banjul, The Gambia. At c11.30 hrs, the call of a Wattled Plover *Vanellus senegallus* drew our attention to a large raptor flying a few metres above the ground with a half-grown lapwing in its talons, pursued by the parent birds. It disappeared into a tree. As we approached, it flew with its prey to another tree with few leaves 30 m further away and perched c6 m above the ground. It then began to feed, and after we had carefully approached to within 25 m we were able to observe it for over 20 mins through 12 x 50 binoculars. Visibility was good, although the sky was overcast.

The raptor was an adult Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus dubius*, probably a male according to the size and extent of the spots on the underparts and face-pattern<sup>2,3,6</sup>.

### Description

A large raptor, distinctly larger than a female Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and almost as large as Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*. Very powerful appearance in flight, with relatively short broad wings of even width. Wingbeats powerful and rapid. Tail very long and head distinctly extended. Appeared slender at rest, with long legs and a small head. Plumage: mantle dark brown-grey, with pale grey to white feather margins. Uppertail dark grey, barred. Underparts pale grey with conspicuous dark elongated or drop-shaped

spots. Flanks barred, undertail-coverts continuously barred. Thighs pale, with dark transverse barring. Underwing pale grey with dark evenly spaced bars on the primaries and secondaries reminiscent of Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* or Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*. Undertail grey with uniform dark bars and a narrow pale terminal band. Striking legs and feet, being feathered with the exception of the toes: pale with dark transverse barring. Head relatively narrow. Crown dark brown-grey, with some paler feathers and a pale nape, throat and ear-coverts. Conspicuous long white supercilium gave face-pattern similarity to Northern Goshawk. Bill dark grey to brownish, apparently not large. Irides yellowish red. A small crest was occasionally visible on the occiput, but was always inconspicuous.

### Discussion

Comparatively little information is available on *Hieraaetus dubius*. It breeds in Africa south of the Sahara, but is everywhere sparse and local, in forests and open savannah. It has been recorded from Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Guinea (proof required), eastern Ivory Coast, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon (but is always infrequent in West Africa), southern Chad, Central African Republic, northern Zaïre and Uganda, central Ethiopia, southern Somalia, southern Kenya, and—in southern Africa—from northern Angola, southern Zaïre, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland<sup>2,4</sup>. Breeding records are, according to Sibley & Monroe<sup>10</sup>, available only from Ghana, Zaïre, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Clancey<sup>3</sup> and del Hoyo *et al.*<sup>6</sup>

also list the species in Botswana and Namibia, but this is not confirmed by other authors<sup>7,9</sup>.

Ayres' Hawk-Eagle is primarily resident: records away from breeding or presumed breeding areas are rare. Barlow *et al.*<sup>1</sup> list three previous records in The Gambia: at Yundum (Western Division) in March 1991 and at Kampant in April 1991 and March 1994. An earlier record, of a bird photographed near Elephant Island on 13 January 1984 was rejected, being considered to be most probably an immature African Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*<sup>5</sup>. Its status is uncertain in Senegal<sup>1</sup>, where an earlier record was deemed unacceptable by Morel & Morel<sup>8</sup>. ☞

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# Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* in Ethiopia and its status in Africa

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L'observation d'une Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola* au Lac Ziway, Éthiopie, le 25 février 1997, est rapportée. Ceci constitue la quatrième observation de l'espèce dans le pays. Sur le continent africain, l'espèce a par ailleurs été signalée en Égypte (3 fois), à Djibouti (1 fois) et au Maroc (1 fois).

On 25 February 1997, while watching numerous Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* foraging along the shores of Lake Ziway, Ethiopia, Benoit Forget and I found a first-winter Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola* amongst them. The bird was noticed due to its very grey overall appearance, two rather narrow but distinct white wingbars and relatively longer tail. Closer views allowed us to see the characteristic broad pale supercilium reaching down the sides of the neck and

surrounding the grey ear-coverts. Other features included: entirely grey upperparts with darker grey wing feathers narrowly edged whitish, very dark grey tail with white outer feathers, white throat, and yellow wash on the breast. I had previously seen the species in Israel, the Netherlands and Egypt.

Citrine Wagtail is rarely recorded in Africa. There are ten (or 11?) records from Egypt (the record from April 1985, mentioned by Goodman & Meininger<sup>2</sup>, is



Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* by Mark Andrews